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INCIDENT AT

STONY PLAIN



Viewer's Guide



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INCIDENT

STONY
PLAIN

Viewer's Guide



The viewer's guide for **Incident at Stony Plain** was written by Shelley Peterson, elementary teacher and doctoral student, in consultation with Lynn Bryan, Alberta Education Language Arts Consultant, and Christine Holyk, ACCESS NETWORK producer.

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BPN 3449-01 Fragments of a Story
 3449-02 The Last Skate
 3449-03 A Story Revealed

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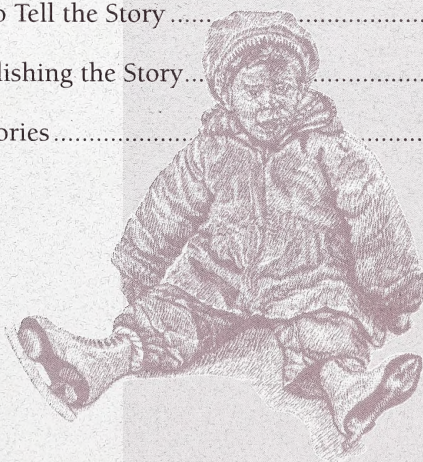


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The incidents and characters in these episodes are fictional and any resemblance to persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

Incident at Stony Plain is a series of three, 15 minute dramatized episodes on video that are designed to encourage upper elementary school students to:

- see themselves as story tellers,
- recognize that there are stories to be found in their daily lives, and
- value the stories that they create.

The video shows how students can better understand themselves and their world through creating, shaping and telling their own stories.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Series

The three dramatic episodes in this series follow Kyle Levesque, a young student in Stony Plain, and his three classmates as they gather and record information to create stories to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Stony Plain Oil Boom.

Episode One: Fragments of a Story

In the first episode, Kyle and his friends gather information for their stories. Kyle decides to interview people who were around at the time of the oil discovery, while his friends, Jason, Erin and Martha, become involved in research at the archives, library and local newspaper office.

Kyle's interview with Stony Plain's Mayor, recorded on his own video, convinces him that he wants to tell a story that includes more than just dry facts, and also that he needs some pointers on camera work.

Kyle yearns to contact his Uncle Yannick, a storyteller extraordinaire who is now a professional filmmaker, but he is notoriously hard to track down. Yannick had left Stony Plain about the same time as the oil discovery and not returned.

While checking out back-issues of the newspaper, Martha uncovers a story about an incident on the night of the last skate 25 years ago. Kyle sees potential in this story and attempts to gather more information about it by interviewing newspaper editor, Alice Compton. However, the interview raises more questions than it answers, because it appears Alice is hiding something about the incident.

Episode Two: The Last Skate

As Kyle videotapes his grandmother's recounting of the incident on the night of the last skate, clues turn up linking the last skate to the oil find, and to Yannick's disappearance. Martha and Kyle decide to investigate this new story and plan to present it through story theatre. Erin and Jason are not convinced that the last skate has anything to do with the oil discovery and they concentrate on the actual oil boom, using puppets to present their findings.

An interview with Stefan Shumek, son of Jake, the man who discovered oil, reveals that Jake drilled for oil because he discovered a patch of oil on the old rink the morning after the last skate.

Later, Kyle makes a dramatic announcement that his Uncle Yannick had been at the rink the night of the last skate and must have been involved in some way in the incident.

Episode Three: A Story Revealed

On the day of the school presentations for the oil boom anniversary, Kyle and Martha watch one of Yannick's old films and find clues indicating that Kyle's Uncle Yannick had used flares to create the unexplained light on the night of the last skate. Kyle and Martha rush to incorporate the final clue into their story theatre presentation.

The performance is well attended, including a surprise visitor, Uncle Yannick. Through Kyle's and Martha's

story theatre, the audience is surprised to discover that Yannick had staged the incident at the rink to give a newspaper scoop to then-fledgling reporter, Alice Compton.

The story wraps up with a family reunion and Kyle's final address to the camera. He states that one event has many stories and that there are still many stories to be told about the Stony Plain oil boom.

USING THE VIEWER'S GUIDE

Suggestions are provided for guiding students through two viewings of the video series:

- the first viewing to capture the essence of the story, and
- the second viewing to focus on the plot, character development, point of view, theme, purpose and mood.

In addition, activities are provided for facilitating students' telling their own stories. Using the questions and activities as possibilities, teachers can design approaches for using this video program that meet the needs and interests of their students.

In the following chart are listed Specific Learner Expectations from the Alberta language curriculum that relate to the questions and activities in the viewing guide.

DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Key Story

Feature

Specific Learner Expectations

Plot

- Predict the probable content using text clues (e.g., titles of episodes).
- Recognize that a well-formed story has a problem, characters' responses to the problem and a resolution.
- Recognize techniques such as flashback that provide information about prior action.
- Recognize that foreshadowing increases anticipation and provides clues to story outcomes.

Character Development

- Recognize explicit and implied relationships among characters.
- Identify change or growth in fictional characters.
- Identify techniques for developing insight into characters.
- Draw conclusions and make generalizations by relating new information to what is known.

Point of View, Theme, Purpose and Mood

- Recognize that the internal and external responses of the main characters to the problem provide a thematic focus.
- Form sensory images in response to a viewing experience.
- Determine the point of view and recognize how it influences communication.
- Determine the speaker's purpose and identify the underlying theme.
- Determine feelings or attitudes that are presented, and the mood.
- Draw conclusions and make generalizations by relating what is known to new information and ideas.

GUIDING THE VIEWING: CAPTURING THE ESSENCE

Set the stage for the students' first viewing of the video series by providing such information about the series as you feel is necessary for providing motivation and background knowledge.

By viewing the three episodes consecutively and with minimal discussion the first time, students will:

- enjoy the unfolding of the plot,
- become acquainted with the characters, and
- become aware of the research activities and story presentations of Kyle and his classmates.

Following are focusing suggestions, for establishing a viewing purpose for each episode. At the end of each episode, encourage a brief discussion among the students to bring out points related to the viewing purpose; then move quickly into the next episode, since an extended time lapse would break the story line.

Episode One: Fragments of a Story

In their search for information about the oil boom in Stony Plain 25 years ago, Kyle and his friends uncover fragments of a story that do not seem to fit together.

Pick out the various story fragments and identify characters that are connected to these fragments.

Episode Two: The Last Skate

As the first episode ended, glimpses were provided of the night of the last skate, 25 years before. Kyle suspects that the missing piece to the story he wishes to tell is hidden in the events of that night.

Look for details about the night of the last skate and for clues that shed light on the mystery.

Episode Three: A Story Revealed

At the end of the second episode, Kyle dramatically revealed to his friends the key to the whole mystery; a solitary figure with a bag over his shoulder who disappears from the rink.

Predict events which will bring the story to a conclusion and watch to see how close your predictions are to what actually happened.

GUIDING THE VIEWING: FOCUSING ON KEY FEATURES OF STORIES

When students view the video a second time, they are better prepared to focus on the key features of the story.

While viewing the video series, students may ask themselves questions such as those following, which focus on the plot, character development, point of view, theme, purpose and mood. A number of questions focusing on each key feature are provided so that you may select those that will meet your students' learning objectives. Possible responses to the questions are provided.

Focusing on the Plot

Episode One: Fragments of a Story

Why is Kyle going to all this trouble for his class assignment? What is Kyle's goal?

- Kyle has storytelling in his blood and he wants to tell his own story—a story he recreates after much investigation.
- Kyle is not pleased with the story as it is told through his interview with Mayor Demchuk and needs his own way to tell what happened 25 years ago.

What clues do you notice in the video which help you to predict what will happen next?

- Kyle talks about his uncle, a filmmaker who did not return to Stony Plain until a remarkable series of events took place 25 years after the oil boom.
- The children ask themselves what a glow of light has to do with the Stony Plain oil boom.
- Kyle voices his feeling that Alice Compton is not telling everything she knows about the unexplained light.

How does the title, “The Last Skate”, help you to predict what will happen in the next episode?

- Because Kyle has introduced viewers to the incident at the old rink, it is possible that the events on the night of the last skate are related to Jake Shumek’s drilling for oil.

Episode Two: The Last Skate

What questions are Kyle trying to answer as he pieces together his story?

- What was the unexplained light and what did it have to do with the oil boom?
- Why did Kyle’s Uncle Yannick leave on the night of the last skate?
- What was Alice Compton hiding from Kyle?

What things help Kyle in his search for the answers to his questions?

- Kyle interviews his grandmother and hears her account of the event.
- Kyle looks through a box of his Uncle Yannick’s memorabilia.
- Kyle re-enacts the incident with the unexplained light.

Episode Three: A Story Revealed

How does Kyle reach his goal?

- Kyle tells the story he has pieced together by dramatizing it with friends.
- Uncle Yannick listens to Kyle’s story and verifies all that Kyle has concluded.

Focusing on Character Development

Episode One: Fragments of a Story

What kind of person is Kyle? What does he do or say that makes you think this about him?

- Kyle is persistent and curious because he keeps asking people questions about the oil boom.
- Kyle is a storyteller because he says that he wants to create and tell his own story. He tells us about his Uncle Yannick, the filmmaker, and says that he has storytelling in his blood.

Episode Two: The Last Skate

How do you feel about Kyle’s Uncle Yannick? What do you see or hear about him in the video that makes you feel this way about him?

- Yannick is not a very likeable character because he is not very thoughtful toward his family. He never calls or visits them.
- Yannick is mysterious. When he went to Toronto 25 years ago, he left poems and movies that he created, so we know a bit about what he was like in the past, but we know little about what he is like now.

Episode Three: A Story Revealed

What changes do you think would have developed in Yannick’s relationship with his family after they found out about Yannick’s part in the incident with the unexplained light?

- Uncle Yannick was not such a mystery to Kyle anymore, and Kyle understood that his Uncle Yannick would do anything for a chance to tell a story.
- Kyle’s grandmother understood that her son, Yannick, was born to tell stories. She was not so hurt about his leaving without telling her 25 years ago.

Focusing on the Point of View, Theme, Purpose and Mood

Episode One: Fragments of a Story

How do you feel about being a storyteller as you view this video? Compare your feelings about storytelling with Kyle's feelings about it.

- *Kyle seems really excited about storytelling and it makes me think that it might be fun to tell a story.*
- *All that Kyle seems to think about is telling his story. Stories are everywhere and anyone can tell a story, so I don't know why he is getting so worked up about it.*

Episode Two: The Last Skate

If you were telling the story using words instead of a camera to create pictures, what details would you give about the setting for the story of the last skate? How would these details make your story more interesting to your audience?

- *Details might include the sounds of skaters laughing and the skate blades on the ice, the darkness of the night, the crispness and excitement in the air.*
- *By using these details, storytellers are creating a mysterious mood which captures listeners' or readers' interest.*
- *These details also help listeners or readers to picture the story in their minds.*

Episode Three: A Story Revealed

Why do you think it was a good idea to tell the story of the last skate using Kyle as the storyteller?

- *Kyle found out something about his own family through telling the story.*
- *Kyle was a curious character who asked the right questions of the right people and put the answers together to make sense of it all.*
- *Kyle cared a lot about his story and worked hard to make it as interesting and meaningful as he could, so we are caught up in his story.*

Through reaching his goal and finding his own way to tell what happened 25 years ago, what does Kyle show us about storytelling?

- *Everyone has many stories to create and ways to tell them.*
- *Stories come from the happenings in our daily lives.*
- *We find out something about ourselves and our lives through telling stories.*

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Focusing on the Plot

1. Design a cartoon strip of the events which show how Kyle pieced together his story and answered his questions.
2. Paint or draw scenes from the story which provide clues about the answers to Kyle's questions.
3. Construct a time-line of the events which led to Yannick's disappearance and to Jake Shumek's discovery of oil under the ice in the old rink.
4. Draw a map showing where Kyle went to find information that would help him to tell his story (e.g., to the office of the mayor to interview him, to the office of the Chronicle to talk with Alice Compton, to his own home to hear his grandmother's story).
5. Create a filmstrip on a roll of paper that tells Yannick's story as he flashes back to his part in the incident on the night of the last skate.

Focusing on Character Development

1. Role play an interview between a reporter from the Chronicle and Kyle's Uncle Yannick in which Yannick is asked to explain why he left Stony Plain the way he did and how he feels about Kyle uncovering his secret.

2. Show how you think Alice Compton felt in the days leading up to and following Kyle's telling of his story by imagining what she might have written in her journal during those days. Do you think she remained upset with Kyle or was she relieved that she no longer had to keep the story a secret?
3. Write a cinquain about Kyle's Uncle Yannick that shows what he did and what kind of character he was.
4. Think about what Kyle, his Uncle Yannick, his friends, and Alice Compton did as storytellers. If they were trying to get jobs as storytellers, what would they include on their résumé? Design a résumé for one of the characters, showing his or her experience and qualifications as a storyteller, along with other qualifications he or she might have.
5. In small groups, students recreate a scene of Stony Plain on New Year's Eve 25 years ago, taking the roles of characters such as Alice, Yannick, Jake, Kyle's mother and grandmother, Mayor Demchuk, and the train conductor. The students freeze in their respective positions. When the director taps two students on the shoulder, the students interact as they think the characters they are portraying would interact during the night of the last skate.

Focusing on the Point of View, Theme, Purpose and Mood

1. Students take the roles of individuals who had a story to tell related to the oil boom. These individuals are provided with the opportunity to tell their story on a radio talk show entitled, "The Stony Plain Oil Boom: We Were There!" The host of the talk show may wish to use these questions as a starting point to draw out the stories from each of the storytellers:

Do you remember anything unusual or interesting about New Year's Eve 25 years ago? Tell me about it.

- *What were you doing while this happened?*

- *What are your thoughts on the unexplained light?*

The radio talk show may be tape recorded and presented to others.

2. Conduct a debate centered around topics such as the following:
 - Kyle should not have been so anxious to pry into other people's lives because he embarrassed Alice Compton by uncovering a secret that should have been left untold.
 - Yannick should have thought more about the feelings of his friends and family before he left Stony Plain 25 years ago to tell stories on film in Toronto.

Students may wish to complete a chart such as the following to record and organize their ideas for the debate.

Providing Support for My Side in the Debate

- Kyle should/should not have pried into other people's lives because:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

3. Design a collage or banner using pictures and words cut from magazines, photographs, three-dimensional objects, and/or photographs. The theme of the collage or banner may be one or more of the central ideas about storytelling from the video (e.g., everyone has many stories to create and to tell, stories come from the happenings in our daily lives, we find out something about ourselves and our lives through telling stories).
4. Recreate the mood of the night of the last skate by constructing a three-dimensional scene using clay or papier-mâché, or by painting or drawing the scene.
5. Illustrate the theme of the video series by designing a poster to advertise it.

STUDENTS TELL THEIR OWN STORIES

In the following chart are listed Specific Learner Expectations from the Alberta language curriculum that relate to the activities students carry out to tell their own stories.

DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE SKILLS

Specific Learner Expectations

- Select and write/speak on topics of interest for familiar and unfamiliar audiences.
- Recognize that a well-formed story has certain key features and that the internal and external responses of the main characters to the problem provide a thematic focus.
- Locate needed materials in a learning centre or library, using the file system.
- Refine and polish their writing (and oral presentations).
- Develop criteria for assessing their effectiveness in presenting ideas or information.
- Judge the effectiveness of a presentation according to a set of criteria.
- Celebrate the development of their ideas by presenting them to a variety of known and unknown audiences.
- Present the findings of personal research, using formats and techniques that reflect their purpose and the needs of their audience.
- Use non-verbal cues, such as body language or facial expression, to extend, enhance or reinforce the communication of their ideas.
- Retell a personal experience as a memoir, and reflect on its significance.
- Paraphrase, elaborate or extend the ideas of others in collaborative learning settings.
- Suggest alternative ideas relating to the topic or line of thought being developed in collaborative learning situations.

Many of the interesting and unusual events that happen in people's lives provide them with starting points for stories that they can tell orally or in writing.

One possible sequence for preparing students to tell their stories is as follows. (Teachers may find it useful to start at any point in this sequence.)

Generating ideas and selecting a focus

Gathering and organizing ideas
and information

Deciding how to tell the story

Refining and polishing
the story



Generating Ideas and Selecting a Focus

Ask students to complete the activity sheet: "Idea Bank for Stories" (directions are on the sheet).

Here is an excerpt from one student's idea bank which may act as a guide in completing this activity:

IDEA BANK FOR STORIES

Category Idea

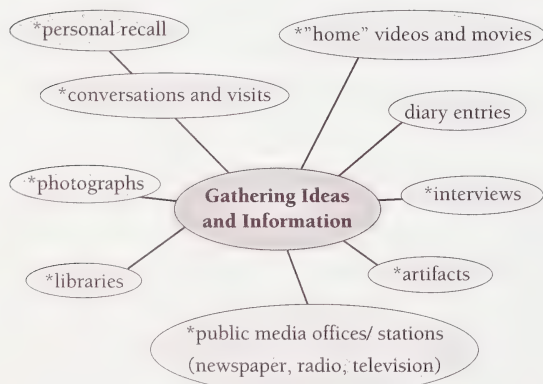
- | | |
|---|--|
| Sports  | Our Hockey Team Played
Against the Moms
Buying New Skates
Playing Soccer in the Mud |
| Pets  | Out Cat Stows Away in
the Car
Helping a Baby Robin That
Our Cat Caught |

Gathering and Organizing Ideas and Information

1. As students begin gathering ideas and information for their stories, they may need to think about the kinds of details that need to be included in their stories. The following questions may provide a starting point:

- What is unusual or interesting about the ways the characters act and/or the things they say?
- How do certain characters feel about other characters in the story?
- What clues could you give to your audience to keep them in suspense?
- What difficulties do characters have in trying to solve their problems?
- What kind of a mood do you want to create? What details will you use to create the mood?
- From whose point of view do you want to tell the story? Why this point of view?

2. Ask students to brainstorm possible sources for gathering this information for their stories. It may be helpful to recall the ways in which Kyle and his classmates gathered ideas and information for their stories. The following "Gathering Ideas and Information" web may be used as a starting point.

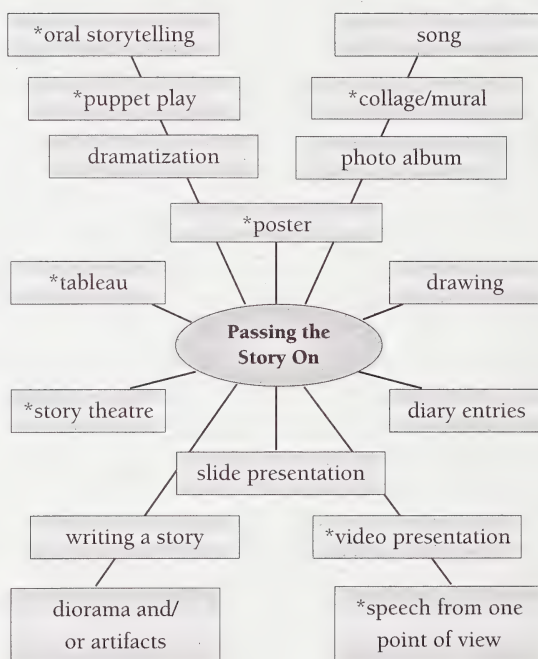


* Indicates methods demonstrated in the video series, Incident at Stony Plain

3. Ask students to organize their ideas by creating a time-line, or an outline of events and details that they will include in their stories.

Deciding How to Tell the Story

1. Ask students to brainstorm possible ways to tell their stories. It may be helpful to recall the ways in which Kyle and his classmates presented their stories. The following "Passing the Story On" web may be used as a starting point:



* Indicates presentation formats demonstrated in the video series, Incident at Stony Plain

2. Discuss the criteria that students may use for selecting the presentation format that best suits the stories they will tell. You may wish to address the following questions in your discussion:
 - How is each method effective? (e.g., diaries are especially good for communicating the feelings of characters; oral storytelling is especially good for creating a mood with the gestures, voice and facial expressions of the storyteller; collages are especially good for communicating the theme.)
 - Which format best suits your story? Why?
 - Which formats for telling stories would be best for your audience? Why do you think they would enjoy these formats?
2. Ask students to think about these criteria when telling their stories to a partner. As they tell their stories, the students' partners provide feedback about how well they have demonstrated the criteria. Encourage students to conduct a self-assessment of their storytelling, as well. The emphasis is on positive feedback, so that students' self-confidence as storytellers is enhanced.
3. Ask students to carry out a similar procedure as they tell stories in groups of three to six students.
4. When students feel comfortable in telling their stories in small groups, they are ready to tell them to a wider audience.

Refining and Polishing the Story

1. You may wish to model effective storytelling practices by telling stories to your students, by inviting guest storytellers, or by using videos such as *Incident at Stony Plain*. From these models, students may generate criteria for effective storytelling practices. The following list can provide a starting point:

- beginning the story in a way that captures interest
- speaking clearly, confidently, and with expression
- creating an appropriate mood
- using words that create pictures in the minds of listeners or readers
- dropping clues about the solution of the problem that do not give it away
- providing specific details about settings, characters and actions
- showing an understanding of characters' feelings and goals
- sequencing events in ways that are easy to follow

Name: _____

IDEA BANK FOR STORIES

1. Write some of the interesting or unusual incidents that have happened to you or to someone you know.
2. Summarize the ideas in the form of a heading or title, providing enough information about the incident that you will be able to recall it later.
3. Write ideas under as many categories as possible, adding categories in the place marked "Other", if you wish.
4. Put a star beside one or two ideas that you want to tell about and that you think would make an entertaining story for your classmates.

CATEGORY IDEAS

Sports		
Pets		
Birthdays		
School Experiences		
Family Vacations		
Playing with Friends		
Other		

Notes

Notes

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